Book Reviews.

"BEITRÆGE ZUR KENNTNISS DER NORMALEN MENSCHLICHEN NEUROGLIA." Carl Weigert, Frankfurt, a. M. 1895.

After seven years of painstaking study the author has succeeded in developing a method by means of which a selective stain of the neuroglia can be made. The nerve cells and their processes do not take up the blue neuroglia stain; they appear yellow by contrast. The axis cylinders and nerve fibres remain entirely unstained. Of the neuroglia only the fibres and nuclei become stained, the cell bodies of the neuroglia cells remain unstained. Aside from the nuclei of the neuroglia cells the method only brings out those neuroglia fibres which are especially differentiated. If there are interstitial substances in the central nervous system which lack such differentiated fibres, they cannot be brought in evidence by this method.

The technic of the method was given in the January number of this JOURNAL. It remains to give a review of the results which Weigert has attained by its use.

He begins his monograph with a historical review of the literature on the neuroglia. The investigations of Frommann, Virchow, Deiters, Golgi, Jastrowitz, Boll, Ranvier and others are reported and discussed here. He points out that Ranvier was the first to demonstrate that the neuroglia structure consists not only of cells, but also of fibres, which latter are for the most part quite independent of the cells.

The second chapter treats on the neuroglia fibres and their relation to the cells. Weigert concludes:

1. The neuroglia fibres which heretofore were considered to be processes of Deiter's cells, are not chemically identical with the protoplasm of these cells but differ entirely from them as to their chemical properties.

2. This chemical difference can be noticed in the fibres, not only at some distance from the cell, but from their very beginning in the immediate vicinity of the cell nucleus.

3. Most of the so called processes of the neuroglia cells are not cell processes at all, but fibres which are completely differentiated from the protoplasm.

If Frommann, afterwards Golgi, and most of the recent authors have asserted, that the neuroglia consists only of cells and their processes, this statement holds true only for the embryonal period. In the fully developed normal state the neuroglia consists of cells and also of fibres, which latter predominate so enormously over the former in quantity and in the space they occupy, that they must be considered the more essential component of the neuroglia.

In the third chapter Weigert discusses the question whether the fibres differentiated by his method are indeed neuroglia fibres. The question is answered in the affirmative and the following proofs are adduced in favor of this view:

1. All nervous structures remain unstained with Weigert's new method, while the fibres stain dark blue [conclusion *per exclusionem*].

2. The fibres represent a modified substance, no more protoplasmatic, and which is "emancipated" from the cell-body.

3. The fibres (and the cells belonging to them) behave pathologically like connective tissue, that is they proliferate when the specific tissue, the nerve tissue undergoes disintegration.

Chapter IV, treats on the relation of the neuroglia fibres to eventual other neuroglia substances and to the connective tissue. Weigert concludes that positively nothing definite can be said on the nature of the neuroglia fibres. Of the negative results the most important is this, that they are absolutely different from all fibres of the common connective tissue.

In the fifth chapter the histogenetic position of the neuroglia is discussed. It is found that the neuroglia has a genetic relation, not only to the ectoderma in general, but quite especially to a true epithelium, also in the true post embryonal sense. On the other hand the seemingly paradoxical fact is stated that the neuroglia behaves morphologically and histologically like connective tissue [Bindesubstanz].

The sixth chapter is taken up with a description of some other histological properties of the neuroglia fibres. These fibres are either more or less straight, or they are markedly curved. They are solid, not tubulated, they are smooth, without varicosities of any kind. Weigert has never observed ramifications nor anastomosis of the fibres.

Chapter VII. and VIII. treat on the general and special topography of the neuroglia fibres. The details regarding the structure and distribution of the neuroglia in the spinal cord and various parts of the brain cannot be reported here, but must be read in the original.

In the ninth chapter Weigert discusses the physiological significance of the neuroglia. His conclusions are for the most part negative. Ramon y Cajal's views on the physiological significance of this tissue are considered as erroneous.

The book concludes with a description of the method, which has led to such brilliant results and which opens prospects for further fruitful research

The many beautiful drawings or pictures are an attraction by themselves, and we can believe that the author in studying the sections, became so enamoured with the beauty of the design that he nearly forgot to study them At any rate the pictures alone are sufficient to excite one's liveliest interest not only for a study of the book but for a study of the method. We fully endorse the author's statement, that a new method is a key for opening the door of the unascendable wall enclosing the scientific treasures;" and that Weigert's method will open the door to many scientific treasures is to be expected, and will be the best reward for the author's patient and laborious work. ONUF.

Leçons Cliniques sur les Maladies Mentales et Nerveuses Seglas. (Salpêtrière, 1887-1894) Recueillies et Publièes par le Dr. Henry Meige. Paris, 1895.

This exceedingly bulky volume is not a systematic treatise on insanity but merely a series of clinical lectures, as the title implies, extending over a period of years Such a book ought to show some special merit in order to be able to gain a place in this age of print Eight hundred pages of closely printed matter, devoted merely to the clinical aspect of a subject, are not altogether inviting at first sight if for no other reason than that they make such an unreasonable demand on the practitioner's time. We doubt whether there is any clinician in mental diseases who should not be able to say in one half this space all that he finds to say in the clinic. The fact is, mere clinical writing is especially liable to become intolerably prolix. The histories of patients, their sayings and doings (especially if the patients are lunatics), can be spun out so interminably and uninterestingly that the reader looses whatever profit there is in them in a mere sense of weariness and ennui Dr. Seglas' book, like too many other French lectures, has this fault of diffuseness well marked. It could certainly have been condensed into one half the space with advantage both to itself and to the reader.

We have been especially impressed with the three chapters on Obsession; and as this subject is still a rather more novel one than most themes in psychiatry, and still needs continued and systematic study to make it familiar to students, we shall review the author's exposition of it, especially as it is one of the best portions of the book. In the first place, we may say that the term "obsession" strikes us as good and concise, and worthy of more general adoption by writers in the English language. The term has been generally adopted in France to denote the mental state which is dominated by fixed and imperative conceptions, and the meaning still applied to it in this country by some lexicographers (*i. e.* possession by demons) seems to be generally ignored abroad.

Seglas points out the fact that "obsedent," or fixed ideas were noted